

## Community resources

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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 06PORTAUPRINCE1667, CUSTOMS DG REPLACED

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

**#06PORTAUPRINCE1667.**

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06PORTAUPRINCE1667</a>	<a href="#">2006-09-08 12:21</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Port Au Prince</a>

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VZCZCXRO6833  
PP RUEHQU  
DE RUEHPU #1667 2511221  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 081221Z SEP 06 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3972  
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1215  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1057  
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0574  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
  
C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 001667  
  
SIPDIS  
  
SIPDIS  
  
STATE FOR WHA/CAR  
EB/IFD  
S/CRS  
SOUTHCOR ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)

COMMERCE FOR SCOTT SMITH  
TREASURY FOR JEFFERY LEVINE  
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2016  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: CUSTOMS DG REPLACED

REF: PAP 1609

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) President Rene Preval on September 7 replaced Director General of Customs Edouard Vales Jean-Laurent with Jean Jacques Valentin, who was the customs' DG from 1994 until 2004 under former President Jean Bertrand Aristide and during Preval's first term. Preval's economic advisor Gabriel Verret told econoff September 7 that some people around Preval promoted Valentin because he had granted favors to "well-connected people" during his first tenure. For example, he said Valentin allowed Youri Latortue, now the senior senator from Gonaives, to hire his "cronies" to run customs' operations in Gonaives. Informed Haitians see Valentin as Aristide's right-hand man and know him as someone who collected money through smuggling to finance the Aristide Foundation. Jean-Laurent, on the other hand, almost doubled customs' revenues since the beginning of the Preval administration and stood his ground against corruption. Even Valentin's sister-in-law, a personal acquaintance of the embassy's political specialist, expressed disbelief and disgust at Valentin's promotion.

¶2. (C) Verret emphasized that the replacement of Jean-Laurent was not a unanimous recommendation, citing himself and Preval's confidante Bob Manuel as advocates for retaining Jean-Laurent. He also mentioned that both he and Manuel have been on vacation for the last couple of weeks, and that perhaps they could have changed the President's final decision had they been in country. Earlier this week, the chamber of deputies' finance commission, headed by Jonas Coffy, sent a letter to the GOH and said it had five days to fire Jean-Laurent and re-assign the customs director at Malpasse on the Dominican border, Jeantal Clervil. Finance minister Daniel Dorsainvil indicated that the government would not respond to this request, and that the situation in Malpasse would not change. Verret said that the letter from the parliamentarians, although it bolstered the argument of "certain people" in favor of Valentin, had little to do with the replacement. (Note: Per reftel, strikers on the Haitian-DR border have been calling for the GOH to dismiss Clervil, who was appointed by Jean-Laurent. End note.)

¶3. (C) Polcouns spoke to Verret and Jean-Laurent at Brazil's national day reception September 7. Both were in a somber mood, and Verret confirmed that he had "made his views known" to Preval but his advice was not accepted. Jean-Laurent was visibly dismayed, saying he had worked 12 hour days for his country and the results showed. He confirmed that Clervil remained at his post "for now," but expressed concern about his future. He said he had earlier worked for Valentin and was guarded in his assessment, but agreed he had buckled under pressure from Aristide. A line of Haitians approached Jean-Laurent to express their astonishment and/or outrage over his firing.

¶4. (C) Comment: After the excitement over the strike on the Malpasse border, and the GOH's firm response to maintain their stance and raise government revenues, the replacement of Jean-Laurent with Valentin is a shock. Not only does this put into question Preval's will to fight smuggling and corruption, but it also questions Preval's strength in the face of those who want Haiti to return to "business as usual."  
TIGHE